

USDA's role in promoting biobased industrial products for federal procurement

Ronald B. Buckhalt
Senior Marketing Specialist
Agricultural Research Service, USDA, Office of Technology Transfer
5601 Sunnyside Ave., Beltsville, MD 20705
Fax: 301-504-4895: rbb@ars.usda.gov

In a systems approach basic research moves to applied research and is then transferred to a commercial entity. Demonstration and market identification lead to commercialization and products are readied for market. The last step in the process, market penetration, is where the best ideas often falter. Push marketing, a company pays to promote products, is often not as effective as pull marketing. Federal mandates to “buy green,” along with similar state and local programs, have the potential of using the \$800 billion leverage of the US governments (local, state, federal) to pull biobased products into the market.

Executive Order 13101, *Greening the Government Through Recycling and Waste Prevention*, charged USDA with listing biobased products in the *Federal Register* by March 2000 and promoting biobased products to the federal procurement community. On August 13, 2000 a notice of intent to publish such a list with a request for public comment was printed in the *Federal Register*. It will be a definitive source of information on the makeup and size of the emerging biobased products and bioenergy industry and will provide a mechanism for tracking the growth of those industries.

With limited funding, USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has developed a pilot biobased products web site (www.usda-biobasedproducts.net). Information on only one of thirteen categories of biobased industrial products is now on the web site, but work continues on the project.

The production of such a list will help trigger federal procurement of biobased products and bioenergy and subsequently lead to greater economic opportunities for rural communities and for our agricultural research community. Such an electronic source book will meet the spirit, if not the letter, of E.O. 13101 and will be part of the overall USDA program to promote biobased products to the federal government as called for in the Executive Order. It will also form the basis for a future list structure to be published in the *Federal Register*.

Government agencies need to know what biobased products are available—“the list.” Federal procurement officials are clamoring for such a list. Federal agencies that supply federal buyers are also eager to list such products in their catalogs. While the list is under development USDA officials will continue to travel, exhibit and speak at various environmental and procurement conferences as part of our ongoing federal outreach.

Current federal discussions about biobased products and bioenergy have created a favorable climate to increase funding for biobased products and bioenergy research as requested by the Administration. Completing and maintaining this list of biobased industrial products will keep the issue fresh in the minds of the public and opinion molders as well as federal procurement officials and customers.